FOUNDATION TRUTHS IN RELIGION

By EDWARD A. HORTON

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FOUNDATION TRUTHS IN RELIGION

TWENTY LESSONS

BY

EDWARD A. HORTON

THIRD EDITION

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PREFACE.

The object of this manual is to set in distinctness, for teacher and scholar, the central truths of Christianity apart from any school of theology. The fulfilment of this aim has been sought by taking broad, inclusive views. I believe that the ten great subjects treated are left as free supplies for conviction and character, unrelated to dogma or sectarian bias. The religious education of the young at the present time should always seek unity and fraternity of doctrine without impairing strength and depth of belief.

These lessons are intentionally constructed as outline suggestions. Teachers will find abundant starting-points, from which they must proceed with illustration and enforcement. Made use of in this way, I am confident that an interesting treatment of these abstract themes can be secured. There is not one of these profound subjects which cannot be approached from the concrete every-day side, which is the only sure way of arousing interest in the Intermediate class work. It is quite likely that by reason of discussion these lessons may readily be extended to more than twenty. Teachers should not be bound too arbitrarily by the prescribed form and allotment of time.

EDWARD A. HORTON.

LESSON I.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

LESSON TEXT.—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."—GEN. i. 1.

QUESTIONS.

1. What do we learn from Genesis about Creation?
2. What does Science teach us?
3. Is Creation finished?
4. In what two ways ought we to think of our earth?
5. What does it reveal?
6. How are we higher than Nature?
7. In what way does Nature teach us Wonder, Thoughtfulness, and Worship?

ANSWERS.

1. When any one tries to read the first part of Genesis, taking every word in the sense we use such words now, he is sure to read it wrongly. The account of the creation of our earth was not intended to be an exact history. Three great truths are found there, clothed in poetic language. The writer wanted us to know and believe those three truths. They are as follows: —

a. All things were created by one God. *b*. He made everything for good, and called all that He had made good. *c*. Man was made in the image of God, and is the greatest among created things.

If we learn as much as this from Genesis, we have laid the foundation of our religion. Very much depends on what we believe about the world we live in. If we believe that God created it, and did it in the spirit of love and wisdom, then we try to find out how even the hard and dark things may work together for good. The older the world grows, the more people believe that everything has some place in the providence of our Maker.

If we see that man is the highest creation, then we study to find how we can understand and use this world in the right way.

2. Science is knowledge, and leads us to facts. Science is young, but she has given us great lights on the origin of the earth and what it contains. Science supports the three great truths we find in Genesis. In these Sunday lessons we cannot study geology, astronomy, and other sciences; but we know what our books at school tell us about the beginning of this earth. And we learn, too, what strange views the first races had. They were savages, and did not know how to read the book of Nature.

The earth is millions of years old. It has grown from mists and forces and elements slowly into what we see now. Our earth is only one of many planets, scattered through systems: our sun is but one of many shining orbs, circling through vast spaces. But this world is God's earth. He made it, and He has not left it. Science tells us of our ancestors who lived in caves. She shows how man rose from the lowest conditions to cities and laws.

3. There was a time when every one thought the world was flat, and that the sun revolved around this earth. Now we know it is round, and turns on its axis and rolls in order round the sun. There

was a time when people believed that God finished making the world, long ago, having created everything good and perfect, and that it went down from this perfect state into a wreck. Now we believe that God planted this earth full of laws and forces and ideas; and they are growing now, up into something grander. The earth has always been improving. This time we live in is the best of all in the history of the world. The earth was once a jungle of forests and a mass of vegetable and animal life: now it is covered with happy homes, noble industries, arts, and inventions. The creation is going on. God is the power, still at work, filling all things with his presence; "In him we live and move and have our being."

4. The world we live in is ours in two ways: it is a gift from the Maker of all things,— a gift to man, that he may enjoy it. How much there is in nature that gives pleasure! Flowers, lovely landscapes, great peaks, the boundless ocean, whispering forests, wondrous sunsets,— a multitude of joys, too great in number to be counted. These have been made for their own sakes; but they are also to be considered as parts of the divine bounty, shown toward us who live in this world beautiful. It is a home.

Then it is a school. Here we learn lessons that help our lives all along the way. The world is before us, asking our minds to think, asking our hearts to admire, asking our wills to act. We suffer, if we do not learn nature's rules; and we cannot be healthy and happy if we are ignorant.

5. We see in nature great forces, hidden powers, that are full of mystery, like plant life, electricity, chemical substances. We find, also, certain laws. Obeying them, we are safe. And out of all our search we get the thought of design. There is a supreme mind in the universe, governing this earth of ours, and joining it to all other worlds in one mighty plan.

6. Man is higher than nature because he subdues all the other created things, and reasons out the causes of creation. We are able to turn to our use what nature provides. Man seems to be one of the weakest of animals, yet by his skill and power he is stronger than all else. He makes his home in every zone, and defends himself against all dangers.

7. As a religious being, man is stirred to wonder as he sees the majesty and goodness of God in the world about him. The more he knows, the greater is this sense of wonder. Then he is made thoughtful by being obliged to study and learn the secrets of nature. At last, man worships the creator of all these things. At first, men worshipped created things, like trees, the sun, the ocean, and other similar objects; but now we look through nature, up to nature's God, and worship the one great Source of life.

To Teachers.

The lessons in this course are intended to serve as suggestions. The successful use of them will depend on a free, wise supplementing of illustrative material. For instance, bearing on this lesson are abundant facts, legends, stories, and pictures, readily available, treating the subject of the creation and the history of our earth. Let the teacher draw liberally on this material, even asking members of the class to bring some contributions. The scholars should give answers to the questions in their own language, the printed answers serving as information and suggestion.

References.

"Beginnings," A. W. Gould; "The Method of Creation," Henry W. Crosskey; "Our Heredity from God," Powell; "The Unending Genesis," Simmons; "Great Thoughts for Little Thinkers" (first chapters), Lucia T. Ames: "Childhood of the World," Clodd.

LESSON II.

THE WORLD WE LIVE IN.

LESSON TEXT.— "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom thou hast made them all."— PSALM civ.

SUBJECTS.

1. Love of the Beautiful.
2. Kindness to Animals.
3. Naturalness.
4. Parables from Nature.
5. Promises of God.
6. Character-making.
7. A Kingdom to be built.

COMMENTARY.

1. These are lessons in which we are trying to get religious and moral truths. Having learned about our world, and how it came to be what it is, let us see what great thoughts naturally grow out of it all. We want to use the earth as a gift from God, and as a friend that teaches us something very valuable. We ought to have the love of the beautiful, and we ought to make that love richer every year of our life. See how the flowers that are carried to hospitals, and into poor homes in cities, make the people happy. That is a little proof of the help that beautiful things give. If we train our eyes and tastes, we can find lovely things in common objects. God spreads beauty all around us. We ought to form the habit of looking for it and admiring it. Some young people see only that which is ugly, and they create the habit of talking about what is not agreeable or pleasant. Cultivate a love of nature, so that your memory will be full of rare pictures.

2. If we appreciate the world we live in, then we are not cruel to the dumb animals. Some of them are so intelligent as to make us wonder if they are souls. They reason and love, and act like human beings. God made them, and they are given to us for proper treatment. Killing little birds for mere sport is cruel; robbing birds' nests in play is cruel; whipping our pets in anger is cruel: these and many other acts, too often done in thoughtlessness, are wrong. Let us always try to be merciful, remembering that our Father in heaven, as Jesus said, marks even the sparrow's fall.

3. If we love nature, then we are more able to be manly and true. Why? Because the boy or girl who grows up with a fondness for the works of God, who loves the stars and hills and woods and meadows, he or she will more likely keep natural. A person who is "natural" is one who has not learned to make-believe. Great men, you will find, have kept young and progressive by always loving the things of nature. As we grow older, our windows begin to have the curtains down; that is, we think more and more about ourselves and our own affairs, we magnify little things. But the habit of climbing mountains, and picking flowers by brooks, and gazing at sunsets, and beholding the great, glorious works of nature, prevents us from growing hard and small.

4. Nature is full of stories, or parables. Jesus used many,— about

the grass and the lilies, about the sower and the seed, about many things he saw in the fields and on the mountains. But what I specially mean is that nature is a book. You can find wonderful romances in geology and astronomy and botany. Nature is the old book, of many volumes, written by the Creator. "Every rose is an autograph from the hand of the Almighty God. On this world He has inscribed His thought." All the earth is full of blossoming poetry. The winds sing strange songs; the stars send down dreams; the seasons are messengers that bring fascinating tales. And all about the good God, and the lovely home He has made.

5. As I look at the world we live in, it has something to say about promises. There is something greater than what we see. All this beauty and law and grandeur point to what we do not see. The face of our friend tells us of his soul, of his goodness and affection. We are fond of that face because it is the expression of something we cherish. So with nature. It is full of promises,— God-promises. He promises truth, if we will search for it in nature; and His promise does not fail. Justice is promised through the laws of nature. Yes, another world we think of, behind and through all this wonderful world we see. "If God so clothed the grass of the field, will He not much more care for you?" Nature is an alphabet, spelling out the promise of God to us, of a life beyond this.

6. Let us remember how this world has been made to help our character growth. We say character is the great thing in life. Every boy and girl has heard that said in day school and Sunday School. From the time we are born, on into the years, God speaks to us, through nature, and offers to give us strength and wisdom. But, strange to say, we generally get only what we carry. That seems a contradiction. No! This is true. We cannot expect anything in nature to have good effect on us, unless we are ready to receive. A blind person cannot see the lovely meadow. So an ignorant or wilful person cannot see the lessons of nature. Some young people talk of "worshipping in nature's temple" on Sunday. Generally, these persons simply ramble and gossip. They do not carry the right spirit and seriousness. But to him who is in earnest the growing character is always fed by the Creator through nature's manifold influences.

7. As the final thought, do we not see how God wants us to build a kingdom out of all the material He has given? He has not made this world for mere pleasure. We are to conquer it, and turn it into a great republic of Christian men and women. He lights the stars by night, and rolls back the darkness for the day. He does all His mighty works, that we may join with Him in bringing in the kingdom of righteousness. Doing that duty here and now, we shall be ready for other privileges. "For we are workers together with God."

To Teachers.

Enforce these subjects by choice readings from appropriate poems by Longfellow, Whittier, Wordsworth, Chadwick, Gannett, and others whose writings richly teach the modern insight into nature's lessons. The Psalms contain lofty utterances as to nature's revelation of God's attributes.

Gem Thoughts.

This world is God's world, after all.— *Charles Kingsley.* O world, what pictures and what harmonies are thine!— *Emerson.* Creation's heir, the world, is mine.— *Goldsmith.*

LESSON III.

THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE.

LESSON TEXT.— "One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." EPHESIANS iv, 6.

QUESTIONS.

1. What did the ancient people think about God?
2. Did the Jews believe the same?
3. What did Jesus teach?
4. What do we believe now?
5. Why does this seem to be the truth?
6. Who are called "idolaters," and what is the meaning of "idolatry"?
7. How do we know God?

ANSWERS.

1. We find that the first people on this earth believed in many gods. They saw all the objects of nature, and supposed that the trees, rivers, storms, and all things were filled with some spirits like their own, only stronger and greater. So they feared some, and loved others, and worshipped all. Nearly everything has been worshipped.

The good and happy experiences were the gifts of good gods: the bad and unhappy results were the doings of evil spirits. So, to make peace, they offered sacrifices to the gods that were bad, or angry.

Sometimes the early tribes believed in gods that cared for them particularly, and these gods were always at war with the gods of other tribes.

Later, men believed in two gods, one good and one evil. In that way they explained evil and sin and death. It was supposed that the good god and the evil god were constantly contending for possession of the world. All this belief was in the childhood of the world, when men and women likened God to themselves, and were not able to think of any source of life above human passion and weakness. Even the Greeks and Romans, as a whole, were of this kind.

2. After a long time the idea of one God began to be known. The Jews were what is called monotheists; that is, believers in one Supreme Power. They did not always hold to it, and often fell away into the worship of "false gods." But the prophets and teachers of Israel called them back, rebuked them, and some time before the appearance of Jesus the Jews were true to this faith.

Very often the Jews would speak as though this one God was only the God of their own people, and did not care for the rest of the human family. They believed that Jehovah, or Yahweh, gave attention to Jewish prayers, but did not hear the prayers of other tribes.

Still they taught this idea of one Supreme Being, and at last destroyed all idols or images representing Deity.

3. Jesus made the Jewish belief clear, broad, and spiritual. He taught: (*a*) the oneness of God; (*b*) the Fatherhood of God; (*c*) the presence of God.

People used to think of God as located in some place,— a great, severe judge, outside of the earth. Jesus said that God is spirit, and must not be thought of in human form. It was supposed that God

ought to be worshipped in one particular spot and in one set way. Jesus said, This is not true: worship is not a matter of form or locality, but an offering of heart and disposition. It was believed of old that God cared only for a few, the "chosen ones." Jesus taught that He careth for all, sending rain, blessings, and love upon the just and the unjust.

4. We have not only the teachings of Jesus about God, but we also have all that science and history can offer. Modern knowledge, which you study in the ordinary books at day-school, tells us that there is one great source of all life: we call that source God. His power, wisdom, love, fill every part of existence. He is nearer than we can think; and yet His presence is felt in the stars, billions of miles away. The flower, seashell, or hidden seed, declare His glory; and the starry heavens repeat the anthem.

We, therefore, believe in a Supreme Being who is the Father-spirit. He created this world and all in it for good, and because He is good and loves to see a happy world gradually grow out of beginnings.

Lord of all being! throned afar,
Thy glory flames from sun and star
Centre and sun of every sphere,
Yet to each loving heart how near! *Holmes.*

5. If we are asked for the proof of this "foundation truth," we reply: (*a*) Science tells us about it, and teaches the unity of all forces and laws. (*b*) History shows how this belief has been received more fully as the world has grown older and known more. (*c*) It is the truth taught by Jesus, and made a corner-stone in his gospel. (*d*) It is the belief that best explains all we see and know.

6. In the Bible we find that idolaters are called bad persons. When missionaries go to foreign countries, one of the first things they try to do is to persuade the natives to put away their idols. What does idolatry mean?

It means the worship of something in the place of God. Probably many people never believe that the image of stone or wood is God; but they like to look at it, and think of Him.

A man can be an idolater even if he never bows down to an image of that kind. We must be careful, and not worship creeds or thoughts of God, or bow down too much to forms and words. If we do, then we are idolaters, and do not worship "in spirit and truth."

7. We learn about God through our souls,—for He speaks in conscience, love, and reason,—through the study of nature, by human experience. Also, we find His attributes defined and enforced in the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth.

Then go not thou in search of Him,
But to thyself repair;
Wait thou within the silence dim,
And thou shalt find Him there! *Hosmer.*

To Teachers.

It has been said that a belief in God, or Christian theism, is the fundamental need of our era,—an enlightened, strong faith in the Supreme Spirit and Order of the universe. If so, then the teaching should be early and the impression deep on this subject. The handling of this lesson should be free from abstract terms. Such words as "finite" and "infinite," "cosmic theism," "evolution," etc., have been avoided. They are serviceable at an older grade than the Intermediate.

References.

"God," an American Unitarian Association tract, by Rev. S. R. Calthrop; "Belief in God," Rev. M. J. Savage; "The Idea of God," John Fiske; "God and the Soul," Richard A. Armstrong. See also Channing, Theodore Parker, F. H. Hedge, and James Freeman Clarke.

LESSON IV.

THE SOURCE OF ALL LIFE.

LESSON TEXT.— "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." — JOHN IV. 24.

SUBJECTS.

1. Church-going.
2. Prayer.
3. Laws.
4. Profanity.
5. The Fear of God.
6. Trusting God.
7. The Holy Spirit.

COMMENTARY.

1. If God is so great and perfect, why do people go to church and worship Him? This is a question sometimes asked. God does not need anything from us, it is said. Yes, He does.

He does not need anything, in one sense, for He is the source of all things; but in another sense He desires the gratitude and offerings of His children.

We build churches, and keep Sunday services, because in so doing we recognize the love and protection of the Creator. But the chief benefit is on ourselves. In church-going we call up great thoughts, and remember who it is that has made the world and all therein. We place before us God's wishes and laws, and put away the wrong standards. Surely, we may say that, if God is our heavenly Father, it is pleasing in His sight to have us gather, and show that we are trying to obey His commands, and that we believe in his care and providence. Worship must not be narrow and selfish.

2. But many are troubled about prayer. If God is so unchangeable and full of majesty, if He rules all the planets, how can He listen to prayer? Does He change? Does He do what we ask?

No, that would bring confusion over the world. Men pray for selfish favors: they often ask for just what would be their greatest hurt. They do all this honestly, but with wrong ideas about God's ways. The true prayer is, "Thy will be done." We ought to be anxious to find out what that will is, to ask for light and strength.

Prayer is natural. It is reaching out toward the Power and Love above and around ourselves. There are prayers of gratitude, of repentance, of faith, of hope, of adoration. They bring us into right relations with our Creator.

3. A great deal is said about "laws," and the "laws of nature," or "the laws of God." What are they? Sometimes persons speak as though God were nothing but a set of hard, iron laws.

Laws are simply God's habits, the way He acts. We learn them, and, if we are wise, obey them. But we can truly say, God does so and so. There is nothing that exists called "laws."

4. There is one evil young people ought to shun with serious care, and that is profanity. The use of the name of Deity in swearing is shocking and sacrilegious. Those who do this sometimes imagine

they are increasing the strength and importance of what they utter. It is a grave mistake. Swearing weakens the force of what is said.

But, while a blot on good manners and right conversation, profanity is full of danger to him who persists in its use. The name of God should be crowned with reverence. To use it in this manner cheapens the thought of our Creator, and debases the mind. Once begun, the habit grows, until holy names and sacred subjects are tarnished. This is the danger, and this is the tendency, even if not proven so bad in every case.

5. In olden times the thought of God was full of fear. Ancient people made sacrifices of animals and even of human beings, to please the gods. Even now many Christians live under the law, not under the gospel; that is, they serve God as though He was a taskmaster and a cruel judge.

We ought to have a proper fear of God. And what is that? A fear of doing wrong, lest it injure God's good plans. A fear of falling below our best aims, a fear of not using the great gifts properly that are offered to us.

A true Christian is good, not from fear of punishment, but from love of truth and of the right.

6. By trusting God we mean that we have faith in His justice. We believe that He judges the motives, and will not ask more of us than we can do. But it is clear that He expects us to do all we can. We must not excuse ourselves too much. Every one has talents, some more than others. We are required to use them to the best of our opportunity, and leave the results and the judgment to Him.

7. When we wish to speak of God as present in the world, we say that the Holy Spirit is at work. We mean that God is moving over all things by His wisdom and love. In other words, God is felt and recognized, though He is always in and through all things,— light, love, and life of all we see and are.

We think of God as Creator, as Revealer, as Inspirer. The Holy Spirit inspires, comforts, guides. It is God Himself shining at times more clearly into our hearts and minds.

Mysterious Presence, Source of all,—
The world without, the soul within,
Fountain of Life, O hear our call,
And pour Thy living spirit in!

Beach.

To Teachers.

You are by no means confined to the seven topics arranged for this lesson. Use freedom of selection and substitution in this, and in all lessons through the course. But seek to make the thought of God real, while maintaining reverence and a high level of religious feeling. Explain how we grow to believe in God and to know him through experience, examples, and great teachings.

Gem Thoughts.

Wisdom and goodness,— they are God (*Matthew Arnold*). God enters by a private door into every individual (*Emerson*). This world is not for him who does not worship (*Hindu*). The pools of faith which have been standing in the hollows of the rocks must be filled with new freshness, and brought into a new union with the universal sea of human life and thought (*Phillips Brooks*). God with us, not as an Eastern despot or a stern bargainer or a painful helper, but a pleading love (*Robert Collyer*).

LESSON V.

ABOUT OURSELVES.

LESSON TEXT.—"God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." GENESIS i. 27.

QUESTIONS.

1. What do we learn from Genesis about man?
2. What does science tell us?
3. Is man imperfect or fallen?
4. How are we different from animals?
5. Is the world better or worse than it was centuries ago?
6. What is the true object of human effort?
7. What is the teaching of Jesus on this whole subject?

ANSWERS.

1. The great truth told us in the book of Genesis about man is that he was God-made and God-like. That is what the writer of the account of creation wanted us to believe. Our lesson text says that man was made in God's image. What does that mean?

It means that we are like God in some ways, else we could not understand him. It also means that somewhere, at some time, there was a beginning. Man appeared, and completed the order of created things.

2. After a while people found that the account in Genesis did not tell everything. It was taken too literally, and led to mistakes. So, many strange ideas were believed about the first man,—where he lived, how long ago it was; and many wrong views sprang up.

These are now passing away, and science is helping us to the whole truth. Meanwhile this first truth in Genesis remains, and shines like a great beacon over all the subject,—man is God-made and he is God-like.

Modern knowledge tells us that the first men lived thousands of years ago. Many animals that existed then have passed away. Some of their bones have been found and put together. The first men were ignorant, and could not speak as we do. They had no fire, tools, or houses.

Slowly our first ancestors made language and picture-writing. They learned how to use rude tools. Step by step they grew wiser and more civilized, and invented many things. Not only has humanity climbed up in this way, but we see how the good, or God, part in man has increased all along the centuries. Arts and laws and religion have improved.

3. If this is true,—and the best facts we have all go to prove it,—then we must not believe that man has fallen. We must believe in the ascent of man.

An old view was that man, once created perfect, was tempted and fell, so that punishment came upon him and upon all who descended from him. But this allegory in Genesis ought not to be understood in that way. Human nature, of which we are parts, is not a wreck. It is incomplete,—like a building unfinished, like a plant half-grown, like a story partly told.

4. Of course we are related to the animals. They are sometimes called our "poor relations." But we are different in many ways.

We say, "I"; that is, we are self-conscious, we can study ourselves. We have the power to think beyond any animal. Our reason goes into principles. We have the faculty of worship. We can make an ideal and follow it. We use symbols and signs to express abstract thoughts. We have the sense of immortality.

5. It is evident, then, that the world is growing wiser and better all the time. The great Channing used to preach often on "the dignity of human nature." He did not mean that everything was right and perfect. He wanted people to respect themselves, and to think more of what they could do to show their divine origin.

When we look back, and see how weak, cruel, and ignorant the first savages were on this earth, and then behold the progress, we understand what is meant by "the dignity of human nature." We find within us (*a*) the power of reason, (*b*) the faculty of conscience, (*c*) free will, or the gift of choice between evil and good, (*d*) the love of the true, the good, the beautiful. Our attention should be given to these, and then we are sure to make the world still better where we are.

6. When we look around, we sometimes think that the aim of life is to get money or to be powerful or to enjoy many things. But that is not true. God is leading us along, and there is only one satisfying object in life. It is to make others truly happy and to provide the greatest good for the greatest number.

The good life is the God life,— an image of his purpose in creating us. The good life is summed up in this: love to God and love to man. I said, God is leading us along, because there is more of this good life now than ever before.

7. Jesus has told us what we are and what we ought to do. He has shown us our real selves. He called all human beings children of God, and asked them to remember that fact. Because, if we do not forget it, then we try to be worthy of the name. Jesus said that we must let the love of God shine into our hearts, and then it would shine through us into the world.

Jesus called that man the greatest who helped other people the most and served his fellow-men. He taught the Golden Rule and the law of little duties. If you wish to know what kind of people he called "blessed," read the Beatitudes in the fifth chapter of Matthew.

Centuries ago the great man was the warrior, the successful man was the tyrant. The gospel of humanity, which is the teaching of Jesus, tells us to-day something quite different: "If children, then heirs: joint heirs with Christ, if so be we suffer with him"; that is, we are heirs of all the past. We are joint heirs with Jesus in his goodness and greatness, if we are willing to practise self-denial and cross-bearing and struggle, as he did. We ought to be willing to do it.

To Teachers.

Illustrate this subject by pictures of cave-dwellers and scenes representing the early life of man on this earth. A vast amount of material exists from which you can draw facts, interesting to young people, relating to the primitive conditions of the human race. But the emphasis must be laid on the inner, or soul, ascent of man, and the assertion of intellectual and spiritual power over the material world.

References.

"Beginnings," A. W. Gould; "Primeval World of Hebrew Tradition," Hedge; "Life," M. J. Savage; "Human Nature not Ruined, but Incomplete," C. C. Everett (American Unitarian Association tract); "The Destiny of Man," John Fiske; "The Perfect Life," Channing.

LESSON VI.

ABOUT OURSELVES.

LESSON TEXT.— "Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?"— 1 CORINTHIANS iii. 16.

SUBJECTS.

1. Self-control.
2. Truthfulness.
3. Culture.
4. Philanthropy.
5. Patriotism.

COMMENTARY.

1. *What is one of our chief duties?* If we are made in the image of God, we must rule ourselves. Self-control is a great virtue. You remember the passage in Proverbs, He that ruleth himself is greater than he who conquers a city. It is certainly a noble thing to explore, invent, and conquer the world outside ourselves; but it is nobler to know and govern ourselves.

How can we do this? By watching our words; by being "slow to anger"; by getting good habits and keeping them; by remembering examples of the best kind. Do you think of the story of the two bears,— Bear and Forbear?

2. *What else ought we to strive for?* Truthfulness, or the spirit of sincerity, is a crown of honor to any one. If we should take for our motto in life, "Be true," and follow it faithfully, there would be no doubt as to the result. Our characters would be strong and grand.

In what way do we show truthfulness? By telling the truth; by keeping our promises; by never being two-faced; by not being afraid; by stopping to think; by not making excuses. A truthful person is honest, clear, reliable. An untruthful person is muddy, doubtful, dangerous.

3. *What is the meaning of the word "culture"?* If we are "children of God," then we were made to grow; and "culture" means making to grow. We want to grow, not only in body, but in mind. We ought to grow in knowledge, in virtue, in goodness, in character. Culture means making the best in us to blossom and bear fruit. It says, "Up with the weeds, and let the flowers have better chance."

Can you mention two texts from the Bible bearing on this? The lesson text is one: it tells us of the sacredness of ourselves, and how we ought to cultivate our best disposition. Another passage is found in the saying of Jesus: "Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." This does not mean we can be as perfect as our Maker, but that we must try to be perfect as human beings.

4. *Have we any duties to others?* A great many. We cannot talk about all of them now. If men and women are to live here in this world, they must think of one another kindly, and do what they can to help make a better world. The rich must help the poor, and the strong must lift up the weak. Some call this philanthropy: it is Christianity, or real religion.

By simplest daily need,
By smallest trifling deed,
We touch the lives of all around:

Words of love will gladden,
Words of hate will sadden,
And through long centuries resound.
James Legge.

Who was the great philanthropist? I think we may say that Jesus was. Philanthropy means the love of mankind. And Jesus so loved humanity that he gave his life, at last, a sacrifice for the cause.

5. *What can we say about patriotism?* We owe loyalty to our country and its flag. Think of the savage, centuries ago, how he crept and slept in the wild woods. Then think of what we have to enjoy in this land of ours. We are safe and happy: our government protects us. This is a land of freedom and justice. Young people should know how all this has come at a great price. They ought to study history, and so find out what it cost in human lives and treasures to win this place for our republic.

Can we become ourselves truly, by ourselves? No! We must be good citizens and neighbors, or we can never be good men and women. Other people need us, and we need them. To be patriotic, you are not obliged to think all other nations are weak and ignorant. But we can see good in other countries while being thankful for our own national blessings.

To Teachers.

The five points offered for consideration do not cover the list of appropriate topics. Each teacher will know how to make the subject practical for the particular class. Carry the main idea home by appealing to local and special illustrations. The great question is, What am I placed in this world to do and to be? Even young scholars will respond to this grave subject when it is handled in the right way.

Gem Thoughts.

Man himself is the crowning wonder of creation, the study of his nature the noblest study the world affords.— *Gladstone.*

Man was sent into the world to be a growing and exhaustless force.— *Chapin.*

Man is the highest product of his own history. The discoverer finds nothing so grand or tall as himself, nothing so valuable to him. The greatest star is at the small end of the telescope,— the star that is looking, not looked after nor looked at.— *Theodore Parker.*

In love to God and love to man
Our simple creed finds ample scope.
Secure in God's unerring plan,
We walk by faith, are saved by hope.
Hedge.

The true test of civilization is not the census nor the size of cities nor the crops. No, but the kind of man the country turns out.— *Emerson.*

LESSON VII.

THE GREAT BOOK.

LESSON TEXT.— "Search the scriptures."— JOHN v. 39.

QUESTIONS.

1. What is the Bible?
2. Are there other sacred books?
3. Who wrote and used the Old Testament?
4. How was the New Testament made?
5. What are the chief English Bibles?
6. What is meant by "Books of the Apocrypha"?
7. Can you name some errors about the Bible?

ANSWERS.

1. We call the subject of this lesson "The Great Book," but really the Bible is made of many books. As they are almost always bound together, they are one book; and so we speak of it. The word Bible comes from the Greek *τὰ βιβλία*, the books. There are 66 books in all,— 39 in the first part, the Old Testament, and 27 in the second part, the New Testament.

This collection, or library, of religious books contains different kinds of writings by different authors, composed at different times.

2. Other nations and other religions besides the Christian have bibles. There are six other collections of sacred writings which are considered by people as holy, and are studied as we study our Bible. In some respects they are alike, but we call our Bible the greatest and best. Some people think we ought not to notice the other bibles, but this is wrong. The truth can never be hurt, and we ought to be glad to know how God has revealed Himself to the world in other countries than our own. There are many beautiful passages in these other books.

3. The Old Testament was the bible of the Hebrews. The books in it were written on parchments, and handed down, with many changes, through many years. Jesus read and studied these writings. Some are history, some are prophecy, some are wise sayings. The Jews divided them all into three parts,— the Law, the Prophets, and the Other Writings.

After a while it was necessary to have these old manuscripts explained, and learned men spent their lives in telling the people what they meant. A large commentary grew out of this, called the Talmud. These learned men were called Masters, or Rabbis; and every one looked up to them with great respect.

The Jews loved to hear their scriptures read, and that was the chief part of the service in the synagogues. Sometimes very pious Jews would wear little cases tied to their arms or foreheads. They were called Phylacteries. In these cases were texts and quotations from the Jewish bible. The wearers thought, in doing this, they were sure to be safe from danger, and could keep off evil spirits. Jesus rebuked this superstition (see Matt. xxiii. 5).

4. The New Testament is composed of the four lives of Jesus, one historical book (the Acts), twenty-one letters, and a Revelation, or vision. The first and oldest parts are the letters written by Paul,

as he went about on his missionary journeys. Probably the first written Gospel was Mark. It was not until many years after the death of Jesus that all these writings were put together, and still longer before it was decided what should be kept and what left out. Many writings have been lost. Jesus did not write anything himself.

The Christians at first used the Jewish scriptures, and then began to read also at their Sunday services the "Sayings of our Lord" and the words of the apostles. It was a long time before the writings of the New Testament were thought to be as sacred as the Hebrew scriptures; but, gradually, the churches and councils decided what ought to be read and studied, and now the Gospels are called the fulfilment, or blossoming, of the Law and the Prophets.

5. The Hebrew Scriptures were written, of course, in Hebrew. The Christian Scriptures were written mostly in Greek or Aramaic. Our Bibles are generally translations from these languages into English. At the head, in point of age, stands the one by Wickliffe, who completed his great task about 1380, using the Latin version. The first printed English Bible was produced by Tyndale in 1526.

The Bible mostly used in all our churches is the King James' Version, translated by learned scholars, under James I., in 1611. What is known as the Revised Version was made a few years ago by English and American scholars. It was hoped that this new form would take the place of the King James' Version, which has many errors. The books of our Bible were written so long ago, and there being a great many different manuscripts, we shall never know just what the true text is in many cases.

6. There are certain books not bound up with our English Bible, called the Apocrypha. Some belong to the Old Testament and some to the New Testament. These are writings that were once considered holy scriptures, and were read by Jews or Christians. But the churches and councils decided that they were not good enough to be included in what was called the "canon," which means the list of books approved by the Church and called "sacred."

7. Sometimes persons say that the Bible was written at one time, and is one book. This is not at all true, as we have seen. It grew. We also hear it said that every word was inspired, and that all parts are equally valuable. To believe this is to hurt the Bible. Other people tell us we must not stop to question what we read in the Bible, but believe it because it is there in God's Holy Word. Our lesson text answers that. "Search the Scriptures," look them through carefully, and go behind the mere words. Yet others say: The Bible, nothing but the Bible, we need no other book. But God's word is not shut up in one book. We want light from everywhere. God is still revealing himself. His truth goes marching on. In our next lesson we can talk this over more, and we shall see how true reverence for the Great Book is shown by using reason and thought upon it.

To Teachers.

Confronting us in this lesson is the great task of telling the truth about the Bible, and yet preserving the reverence and love for it which ought to exist. We are changing from a blind belief in the letter to a noble faith in the spirit. The succeeding lesson will give opportunity for some positive teaching as to the claims and rank of the Bible.

References.

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LESSON VIII.

THE GREAT BOOK.

LESSON TEXT.— "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet."— PSALM cxix. 105.

I. SHOWS THE WAY.

We will talk over some of the helps given by the Bible. First, it shows the way. What way? The right way. And what is the right way? It is the path of the righteous. The Bible teaches that character is the greatest thing in the world. As the lesson text says, like a lantern or lamp, its pages guide us along the dangerous road of life, showing us where to be careful and how to save ourselves from evil.

II. EXAMPLES.

Very often this help is given in biography, through the lives of great characters. Some of them are warnings: they show us the sufferings of the wicked. Others are good and noble: they point out the triumph of the virtuous man. We see kings, farmers, statesmen, fishermen, poets, and priests, and many other characters move before us, each one leaving a lesson of some kind. The Bible is full of life, — full of real men and women, boys and girls. They are doing something that interests us. Some people say they cannot get interested in the Bible because it tells of things that happened long ago. But these same people read stories — very poor sometimes — of persons who either lived in the past or never lived at all, and think them very interesting. If they would go to the Bible with a right view, then the book would seem attractive.

III. HISTORY.

When we go to day-school, we like to read history. Sometimes we find it hard to study regularly the books that are given us for that purpose. But we all love to read the accounts of great events in the past. History tells us how we came to be in America or England, how other nations are what they are, and why they live where they do.

The Bible tells us how worship grew and how religion was made better. The Old Testament is a lamp of knowledge; and we go back, far into the old times, and trace the way men and women tried to find God, and what they thought, and how they expressed their ideas. Everything that does this ought to be prized by us; and the Bible, above all other books we know, gives us light on the growth of man from the infancy of superstition to the manhood of the religion of spirit and truth.

IV. REVELATION.

On the other side, too, we can find out in the Bible a great deal about God's revelation to man,— not everything, but so much about it as to make us love the book and always go to it for help.

We see how humanity opened the windows of his soul, and God sent in His light; that is, His truth. Science tells us this, too; and so does our own experience. But, when we ask the Bible to tell us how God is revealed, how we can find Him, we have plain answers. We see men in the Bible stories who made their hearts hard and were selfish. They did not find God. Then we read of some other men

who loved their fellow-men, and were pure in heart. To them God revealed Himself. Jesus tells us in that book that, when we listen in the right spirit, we can hear God speaking to us, His children; and, when we open our eyes in a loving, trustful way, we can see His providence over all things.

V. Commandments and Beatitudes.

We find in the Bible two mountains. From one the ten commandments were given: on the slopes of the other were spoken the beatitudes. The ten commandments are the heart of the law, the beatitudes are the heart of the gospel. So we have the law and the gospel in the Bible.

Jesus said he came to fulfil the law by the gospel. Not to throw away, but to complete the law, was the aim of the Great Teacher. This law is behind every judge to-day, and is used in our courts to keep bad people in check. This gospel is all the time working to-day to make people good,—not through fear, but by love. You ought to know the beatitudes to repeat from memory. They begin, "Blessed are they."

VI. Prophets.

The Bible tells us not only about law-givers and wise men, but it contains the sayings of prophets. These great leaders were in advance of their times. They rebuked the evils of their day, and asked the people to build a kingdom of righteousness. What noble souls they were! Even now, centuries since they died, how the words they uttered thrill us and make us ashamed of small, mean aims in life. The prophets — most of them, the best of them — had faith in God and faith in progress. They were reformers. They were not afraid to speak out for justice and the right.

VII. The Great Prophet.

The New Testament contains the record of the life of Jesus, and to it we turn to find what he taught. There are many different sects, and many differing opinions as to what Jesus meant; but all the sects take the name Christian. And most of the world that is called Christian, and many who are not known by that name, agree that there is nothing more to be desired in this life than to have the spirit of Jesus and to follow his example.

To Teachers.

The previous lesson opened the door to the consideration of the facts as to the origin and nature of the books in the Bible. Also, it pointed out errors of view as to its character and authority. This lesson is purposely devoted to a positive statement of the true use and genuine helpfulness of the Bible, without comparison or critical qualifications. The points made can be increased in number or expanded in places, as may seem best to the teacher.

Gem Thoughts.

This, then, has been our object,— to find sure and safe grounds for the continued use and authority of the Bible.— *Matthew Arnold.*

Our chief anxiety should be to use the Bible for increase of inner life,— never as a cloud to darken the dayspring, but as an aid to make more audible and persuasive the voice of the living God, in whom we, as well as Isaiah and Paul, live, move, and have our being. *J. H. Crooker.*

The word were but a blank, a hollow sound,
If He that spoke it were not speaking still.
H. Coleridge.

This collection of books has taken such a hold on the world as no other.— *Theodore Parker.*

LESSON IX.

ETERNAL LAWS.

LESSON TEXT.— "Trust in the Lord, and do good."— PSALM xxxvii. 3.

QUESTIONS.

1. What are Right and Wrong?
2. What is Conscience?
3. Does God punish?
4. Are there different kinds of suffering?
5. How is character made?
6. In what way do habits hurt or help us?
7. Does God forgive?

ANSWERS.

1. By way of making excuse, sometimes persons say that no one knows exactly what is right or what is wrong, and so they can do as they wish. That is only a half-truth, and it may work like poison in the mind.

It is true that we know more now than the people did long, long ago. The first people on the earth did not understand what God wanted them to do. But we are wiser and know better, and we must not make excuses of that kind. Of course there is yet much more to learn; and those who live after us, we hope, will know still more and see the right clearer. The people centuries ago did not mean by right and wrong just what we do in a hundred ways. They never spoke of "eternal laws." The old Hebrews did, and we see in the Old Testament how hard they tried to obey God's laws as they understood them.

That is right which helps us and all other human beings to health, honor, service, and virtue. That is wrong which breaks down health, saps honor, makes us selfish, and weakens personal character. That is right which comes nearest our idea of justice and good will among men. That is wrong which makes us fall away from the Golden Rule and our plain duty to God.

2. There is something that we call "conscience." It is found in every one of us. If you ask me to explain just what it is, I cannot do it in one or two words. A friend says to you, "I will not do what you ask of me: it is against my conscience." What does he mean? He means that, as he looks at your plan, it is not a good one, and to carry it out would be wrong. You think otherwise, and say that your conscience supports the plan. Here is a serious difference. Both you and your friend stand by conscience.

Conscience never differs, though in one respect it always urges each one to do right, and gives us pain when we do wrong. The difference is in the judgment of different persons. Some are more intelligent than others, some are more anxious to find the right and do it than others, some have been better trained to see the right and love it than others.

But conscience, or the moral judge in our soul, is a part of our being. Therefore, we must be careful to keep it clear and strong. We may call it "a voice,"— the voice of God. We may call it the "will of God," pressing our wills to act rightly. We may call it our better self, rising before us and pointing the noble way.

3. In olden times men believed that the gods punished mankind by direct means, as a jailer would punish a prisoner; but, now that we believe in one good God, we see that He has made laws that are intended to help us. If we disobey, we are punished by natural penalties. Put your finger in the fire, and it is burned by the natural law of fire. So in right and wrong: when we break a moral law, we must suffer the natural result.

The body suffers by neglect of the laws of the body; and the soul, or character, suffers by disobeying the laws of the soul. We do not know all we need to learn yet about these spiritual laws, but we have a great deal of light to guide us.

4. Sometimes we suffer through ignorance; sometimes we suffer by the conduct of others; sometimes we suffer in strange ways, not knowing why or how the injury comes.

But, while there are different causes of suffering in the world, we are now talking about those which are in our control; and we must always be sure that we do not charge to some other cause the source of trouble and injury that justly belongs at home in our own thought or action.

God does not make us responsible for wrong which was done by others, though we may suffer from it. That was the error of old theology, expressed in the "fall of Adam," which your teacher will explain and contradict. God looks at our motives, our circumstances, our opportunities,— we may reverently say,— and judges us by them all.

5. We see now how character is made or unmade. Character is really a living conscience. A man may be very learned or eloquent or seemingly religious; but he is without character, if his conscience is dull and dead. The "eternal laws" of right and wrong will punish him, and give him just suffering here in this world or in some other life. Character is made by building up around the quick sense of right and wrong a noble, brave, intelligent array of habits.

6. Because habits are the harvest reaped from our daily acts; and, if the harvest is a good one, it feeds character: if a bad one, it hurts it, and hurts it more and more. "We cannot gather figs from thistles," said Jesus. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

7. We are told that God forgives those who repent of their wrong-doing. What truth must we learn about that? Can we do anything, however wrong, and by saying we are sorry have the consequences all removed? No! Jesus did not teach this.

By repenting, by striving to do better, by looking upward to our heavenly Father, we begin to feel what forgiveness means. The sunshine of God's love shines clearer on our hearts, and we seem to hear Him say: "Thou hast turned from the wrong path to the right way, and there I will guard thee and keep thee."

We do not believe that God is ever angry. We do not believe that He sits on a throne, like a stern judge, sentencing bad people to eternal punishment. We do believe that wrong-doing brings its own penalty, and for it one must give account in better deeds and holier spirit.

To Teachers.

The plain object of a lesson for this grade on such a theme must be to enforce a proper appreciation of the responsibility of human beings, while presenting at the same time a loving, just view of God. It is not easy. True. But that is the demand.

References.

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LESSON X.

REVIEW.

I. The World we live in.

Three great truths we ought to remember that belong to this subject.

First, the world we live in is a home prepared by our heavenly Father. Beauty and comfort more and more abound, and are more and more seen as we add new truth to that which was known before.

Second, this world is a school where lessons are taught that give us pleasure and profit. We learn that which we shall never tire to dwell on, and by which we can hope to prove our claim to the glorious name of the children of God.

Third, here in this universe are we called to act, to be what Nature and her laws decree. From every side come calls to work for the glory of God and the service of man. He who is idle is wasteful of wonderful opportunities.

We gain in knowledge, reverence, and freedom as we find out what is true about the world we live in. Ignorance is bondage; the truth makes free. God's epistles are written on rocks, in stars, through forests, and in the laws of human life.

II. The Source of All Life.

There is one God, the source of all life, in whom we live and move and have our being. He is the Father of our spirits, and knows us better than we know ourselves. He is "nearer to us than breathing," yet His presence is felt in the farthest star. He is wise and good, showing justice and mercy to all.

As the sun at morning often tries to shine through low fogs, breaking at last upon the earth with full beams, so this truth of the oneness of God, and of His Fatherhood, has gradually brightened, burning away errors and superstition. It is the great message Jesus brought, and the glory of this truth will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

God's name should ever be spoken reverently. We can find Him in the beautiful scenes of nature; but let us remember how sacred and holy His presence becomes when we think that He speaks in our hearts and is revealed in our souls.

III. About Ourselves.

Man is the highest of God's creation. As the child of God, he partakes of the divine nature, and is capable of wisdom and love. He is meant for progress, and is truly happy only when finding fulfilment. While God has created the sun and the moon and the stars, the winds and the waves, so that they cannot disobey, he has given man freedom to choose to obey or to disobey. In this gift of freedom the most undeveloped man is higher than anything in nature, no matter how great it may seem to be in majesty or beauty.

Man is naturally religious; and we find along the past altars and churches, showing that he has worshipped in some way at all times and in all places.

Man cannot grow alone. His progress is only possible as he lives a life of helpfulness to others. The command which he must follow

is that great Christian law of love to God and love to man. As this is practised more and more, we shall see society grow into a brotherhood; and the Golden Rule will become the blessing of man to man in daily life.

IV. The Great Book.

The Bible is a treasure-house, full of wisdom for the mind, examples for our guidance and warning, comfort for our sorrows, and a great help in the battle of life. It is a record of God's revelation of spiritual truth along the past. In its pages we trace the growth of the thought of one God, from the times of Abraham and Moses to its flowering in the time of Jesus. We listen to the prophets proclaiming the call of Jehovah to His favored people to turn from idols, to live righteously, and to guard Israel's kingdom. Then we hear, in after-times, the great Teacher spreading the "good news" of the kingdom of God, into which all the nations of the earth shall enter.

The Bible was made for the use of man, not man for the Bible. It is not closed; but round its open volume gather the revelations of all ages, and in its light shine the truths uttered by God's prophets everywhere.

V. Eternal Laws.

God has placed in every soul a voice called conscience. It exhorts us to follow the right and to shun the wrong. While in different places and in different persons the choice of right is not alike, yet the eternal monitor is ever reproving or approving. We are to be judged by our advantages. From him that has much, much will be expected. God is just. He will not punish the innocent. His laws are fair and equal.

Repentance is the turning from the wrong to the right; and, when that is done, God's forgiveness falls like sunshine on a dark path.

Punishment is the penalty that follows a broken law. We may break one of God's laws in ignorance or in anger or by reason of selfishness. God's purpose is that we may be happy, obedient children of His love. Punishment separates us from that love: penitence brings back the heavenly Father's gift of it again. His love is never withheld. It is our turning from it that brings the sense of loss. He who turns from the light faces the darkness, but the light is still shining and waiting.

Gem Thoughts.

On mightier wing, in loftier flight,
From year to year doth Knowledge soar;
And, as it soars, Religion's light
Doth onward grow from more to more.

Bowring.

The manly, the noble, the hero, the awakened,—him I call the right and true man.— *Burm. Budh. Dhammapada.*

Religion is our supreme good, by giving life and force to our highest powers, bringing them into the healthiest and most harmonious activity, and quickening us in the pursuit of perfection.— *Channing.*

LESSON XI.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

LESSON TEXT.—"In him was life; and the life was the light of men."—JOHN i. 4.

QUESTIONS.

1. Where was Jesus born, and where did he live?
2. What did he do?
3. How has he been called?
4. Where do you find the record of his life?
5. Will you explain the phrase "Light of the World"?
6. Why are there so many Christian sects?
7. Is the religion of Jesus spreading in the world?

ANSWERS.

1. Palestine is not large, but the Hebrew people have made it famous. It never had much trade, but its influence has gone out all over the world.

In the time of Herod the Great, when Palestine was under Roman rule, Jesus was born. We cannot be sure as to the exact place. Some say Bethlehem, but there are many reasons for supposing it was Nazareth. At least, he was called "Jesus of Nazareth"; and his first followers were called Nazarenes. This Nazareth was a little village, and there, amid its vineyards and simple homes, Jesus spent the years of his childhood. Joseph, his father, was a carpenter.

We know but little of him until he appeared as a Teacher and Preacher. He went about preaching,—sometimes to a few people on the roadside; sometimes by a lake, standing in a boat, to a crowd on the shore. From town to town he went, and from city to city. All his life he lived in Palestine, and finally died at Jerusalem, the great city of the Jews. He was but little more than thirty years old when he was crucified.

2. I have said that he went about preaching. This brought him to his death. The "common people heard him gladly," but the priests and rulers did not like what he said. They declared that this new prophet was a false one. They feared his honest words, and tried to find reasons for putting him in jail. Sometimes he was in danger of his life. Stones were thrown at him, and plans were laid to kill him.

But Jesus did not stop preaching. He felt that he must tell the "good news" of God and his love. He healed the sick and made the sad happy, and gave kind words to the unfortunate. He turned the wicked from their bad ways, and went about doing good. And for this, at last, the cruel priests and officers of the law sentenced him to be hung on a cross between two thieves, who were also crucified on crosses.

3. After his death, and even before, some names were given to him that have come down to us. Jesus has been called The Christ. From this comes the title we know so well, Jesus Christ, which means Jesus the Anointed. He is called The Messiah, meaning that he was the one whom the Jews expected to come and save the Hebrew nation from tyrants. He has been called one of The Trinity, or God the Son, because people thought Jesus was so good, so powerful in miracles, so like God, that he must be God himself. He is called Saviour, because

people believed that he was sent from Heaven to save the world from sin, and by no other way can man be saved.

We call him our Leader. We sit at his feet as our Teacher. We, too, may call him Saviour, as he leads us by the light of his life and gospel to love God and man and to be like him.

He called himself oftenest by the name "Son of Man." He is to us both Son of Man and Son of God; and he asks us to be both, so far as we can, in discipleship and faithful following.

4. All that we know about Jesus, of any value, is in the New Testament. After Jesus died, as we learned in the lesson on "The Great Book," those who had been with Jesus, or had heard the facts from others of his followers, wrote out the accounts of his life. We have lost many things, but the Four Gospels contain enough to give us a universal religion.

5. It is this term, "Light of the World," that brings Jesus before us, so that we cannot but love him and give him our hearts. He was full of unselfishness; did not seek his own; sought out the lost sheep; gave himself, like pure, unstained glass, to the flood of God's own love, until it poured through and knew no check. In him was no guile. He forgave, and did not remember his enemies.

He was also a light to the whole world, because he came to bear witness to the truth. He was "a witness and a leader to the people." So we use Bible language when we say that he is our witness to the greatness of divine humanity, and our leader toward the heights of perfection.

6. Jesus was clear in his preaching, so that the humblest man could understand. "Follow me," share my spirit, do as I do, love God and man,—those commands he uttered.

But we look about to-day; and what a multitude of sects and churches there are, all bearing the Christian name, all claiming to be the only true disciples of Jesus of Nazareth! These differences are made by opinions and wrong-headedness. The hearts of the people are nearer each other than their heads.

7. But the religion of Jesus is spreading, even with all this splitting into sects. And the different creeds are changing, growing more and more tender and Christ-like. The world is gaining slowly, but surely, in the direction Jesus pointed.

As James Freeman Clarke has well said, "Faith in Christ is trusting in him as a revelation of truth and love." That faith is increasing the world over. Belief *about* him is not so important. That often leads to discussions and creeds. Faith *in* Jesus and the faith of Jesus leads to life more abundantly.

To Teachers.

The language may seem hard for the pupils, in places; but a little conversation and explanation will soon render the whole thing simple and clear. The last paragraph is a good example. Ask the pupils to tell the difference between "faith in" and "faith about," illustrating how we have great faith in a bridge that has been tried, but our faith about that bridge, or our knowledge of all the construction, is very slight and possibly erroneous. The true aim in teaching is to use the highest language and most advanced thoughts possible to the grade of the class. Teaching down or talking down to pupils is not to be commended.

References.

"What think ye of Christ" in Letter and Spirit? by Richard Metcalf; "Concerning Jesus," in Old and New Unitarian Belief, by J. W. Chadwick; "Jesus and the Gospel" in The "Latest Word of Universalism," by Rev. J. Smith Dodge, Jr.; "The Influence of Jesus," by Phillips Brooks; "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," and "The Real Jesus," by Howard N. Brown (A. U. A. Tracts); "Jesus Brought Back," by Rev. J. H. Crooker.

LESSON XII.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

Lesson Text.— "Let your light shine." — Matt. v. 16.

Bible Words.

Let us take our Bibles, and find what is said there about Jesus, and what he says himself. This will be the best way to learn how he is the "light of the world."

In the Gospel of John, chapter xiv., verse 1, Jesus says, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." He meant that we must listen, and understand the truth he taught. For, in another passage (John xviii. 37), Jesus says, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."

Now, with your Bible ready to turn to the references, let us mention some of the things Jesus did.

1. Jesus preached good news to the poor, and healed the broken-hearted (Luke iv. 18).

2. He called sinners to repentance (Mark ii. 17).

3. He comforted the sad and weary (Matt. xi. 28, 29, 30).

4. He sought out and tried to save those who were very wicked (Matt. xviii. 11, 12, 13, 14).

5. He declared God's love (John xvii. 26).

6. He was willing to give his own life for others, to help them (John x. 11).

7. He taught the rule of the Christian Brotherhood (Matt. xii. 50).

There are some other verses we ought to search out and read in this lesson. Paul was the great missionary who went on long journeys, telling the people about Jesus and what Jesus had done. Paul wrote some letters, and they have been kept so well that we have them now. He thought Jesus was the "light of the world"; and in 2 Corinthians, chapter iv., verse 6, you will find what Paul said in one of those letters.

In another letter Paul tells some early Christians they have been made free in Christ, and must be careful not to go back into bondage (Gal. v. 1).

Jesus often said, "I am come to do the work of my Father"; and Paul in one place so speaks (1 Cor. iii. 23).

A Disciple.

When any one heard Jesus, and wanted to join with him in spreading the "good news," he was called a "disciple." And what do you suppose the first thing was that Jesus asked of the new disciple? He always said the same thing to every one who came to him. It was this: "Let your light shine."

It is the command to us, to you and to me, to the teachers and all the scholars: "Let your light shine." Jesus not only gave light, but he lighted others, and asked them to give out rays of love and goodness. In John xiv. 6 are these words of Jesus: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." A great preacher, Theodore Parker, wrote this stanza: —

> Yes: thou art still the Life; thou art the Way
> The holiest know,— Light, Life, and Way of heaven.

And they who dearest hope and deepest pray
Toil by the light, life, way which thou hast given.

What does this mean,— "way, truth, and life"?

Jesus is the way, because his example shows us how we ought to worship and how we can find God.

He is the truth, because his teachings are true, and, if followed, will bring happiness, usefulness, and goodness.

Jesus is the life, because his spirit of love and sacrifice once felt in our own hearts will bring new life. We understand better the name "child of God."

A disciple, then, is one who wants to learn all he can about the way, the truth, and the life, and lets his light shine. The more he loves and learns, the more light he can give.

WHAT WE OUGHT TO READ.

We ought to read and commit to memory some of the parables, or stories, Jesus told. He talked in a way every one could understand. I hope you know well the stories of the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Pharisee and the Publican.

Then there are many sayings of Jesus put together, called the Sermon on the Mount. You will want to read all of that. You will find the Beatitudes in this "sermon," where Jesus tells us what kind of people are really happy. You would not at first think he was right, but do not be too sure. Stop and think it all over.

Jesus was full of kindness and tenderness; but sometimes he was stern, because he thought he must be, to do good. Certain deceitful men would often try to make him say something wrong or try to show that he was not a pious man. Then Jesus would speak out in strong words. He did not like hypocrites and hard-hearted men.

Once he went to the great temple at Jerusalem; and he saw a crowd of buyers and sellers, making a great noise, and disturbing the religious services. He drove them out, saying, "This is my Father's house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers."

TO TEACHERS.

Scholars are always interested in the facts of the early life of Jesus. In Gannett's four little pamphlets on the Childhood of Jesus, you can find ample material. Rev. H. N. Brown's "Life of Jesus" and Rev. W. W. Fenn's "Flowering of the Hebrew Religion" contain narrative attraction for pupils of this grade. The supreme object of the teacher in this lesson should be the presentation of the character and mission of Jesus in a beautiful, persuasive form.

GEM THOUGHTS.

The kindest and the best shall find in Jesus a blessing on their good endeavor, a summons to the ardors and the satisfactions of an endless quest.— *Chadwick.*

The teachings of Jesus are suited to make a universal religion, because they appeal to men's conscience and their sense of religion everywhere.— *C. F. Dole.*

Jesus is to us to-day our great spiritual inspiration and example.— *M. J. Savage.*

Wisdom, faith, love, and holiness all found their reconciliation and adequate measure in Jesus Christ.— *Mozoomdar.*

I can almost dream what Socrates would say to any man who said there was no difference between Jesus and him. One is redeemer: the other is philosopher. One reveals, and the other argues.— *Phillips Brooks.*

LESSON XIII.

THE ENDLESS LIFE.

LESSON TEXT.— "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."— 1 COR. xvi. 49.

QUESTIONS.

1. Have people always believed in a future life?
2. What did Jesus teach?
3. What is the meaning of the lesson text?
4. Ought we to be good and noble, even if we did not believe in a future life?
5. How does this truth help us?

ANSWERS.

1. What we call death is the going away of our friends. They are not with us any more as they were. We think of them, and wonder where they are, what they are doing, and if we shall see them again.

Long, long ago it was just the same. Death is not a punishment. God has made it a law out of his wisdom and love. The world would be filled with everything crowding everything if this law was not in force.

Now the people of long ago, the first people that lived, they probably wondered why they could not live here on the earth forever. But they grew old and weak, and at last their bodies were of no use. So the friends expected to see them come back. But they did not. These relatives and friends buried food and bows and arrows and clothes with the bodies. But the spirits never came back.

Some thought they were off away on another hunting-ground. Others said these departed spirits were back again, but hidden in animals and human beings. Many people believed that, when any one died, he came back to earth and went where he belonged, according to his nature. If he was deceitful, he became a snake; if bold, but bad, a lion; and so on in many ways.

After a while people believed in a heaven for their own friends and a dark place for their enemies Others believed that every one would come back after death,— a long, long time afterward,— and enter the bodies they once had, and be rewarded, if good, or punished, if bad. Some have believed that every soul sleeps after death, and waits for a trumpet to be blown by an angel. Then they will all awake, and be judged.

2. When Jesus came, he found many strange ideas about death and the future. He taught something better. He said there were many rooms in his heavenly Father's mansion. He also said, "I go to prepare a place for you." Always he tried to take away the terrors that hung about the idea of death. You remember the passage, "I am the resurrection and the life." He spoke so that one of his disciples said, "Death is no more." What did that mean?

It meant that the fear of death was banished by the words of Jesus. His gospel of God's love and man's sonship to God showed the future life to be real, beautiful, and sure. The only fear Jesus spoke about was the fear we all ought to have, lest we go away from our

bodies, and are not ready to hear God say, "We'll done, good and faithful one."

3. In this way we understand what the lesson text means. We are now bearing what we call the "image of the earthy"; that is, we are a part of this earth-life. If we bear it nobly and grandly, we shall deserve to bear, or have, the "image of the heavenly"; that is, we shall "go higher," and become more like God.

You see what I mean by the "endless life,"—in the language of "Our Faith," "the progress of mankind onward and upward forever."

Then there is another meaning to the lesson text. "As we have," may signify: in the same manner that we have lived in this life we shall live in the next; that is, if we have been worthy of our nature here, and improved our opportunities, in the same way shall we learn more and enjoy more in the life that is to be. If we have been cowardly and unworthy, then we begin the next life in a way to suffer and regret.

4. Sometimes people say, "Well, if I did not believe in a future life, I would not be good." That is wrong. We believe in the endless life; but, if we did not, we ought to do right, because that is the way to make the world better. Truth is truth, justice is justice, and kindness is kindness always and everywhere.

5. But you may ask: "If that is so, why do we need to believe in immortality? Why do people seem to love to talk so much about heaven and angels and the heavenly Father's mansion?"

We are helped by this "foundation truth" in many ways. A man can live on bread and water, but he will not be a complete, strong man. We can live in the desert alone, but not so happy or so useful would we be as to live in a family with friends, and work. So we can be good and kind without believing in a future life; but we cannot do all we ought, neither can we be as happy as when we believe in the endless life.

This truth gives us courage. We work on for a great destiny. It comforts the sad and warns the wicked. It holds out hopes of seeing our friends, and takes away the sting of death. It gives us a grander thought of God.

The Father's house is mansioned fair
Beyond my vision dim:
All souls are his, and here or there
Are living unto him.

Hosmer.

To Teachers.

Introduce interesting facts about the early beliefs of savages as to the future life; also touch the Egyptian idea of transmigration. Leave a clear spiritual impression that Jesus taught the eternal, the endless life. Explain how figurative the language is which he used about future places and conditions.

References.

See Channing's and Parker's great sermons on Immortality; "The Destiny of Man," by John Fiske; "Evolution and Immortality," Chapter XIII., in "The Religious Life," by M. J. Savage. The encyclopedic work on this subject is by W. R. Alger, "History of the Doctrine of the Future Life." For short, popular sources consult "The Immortal Hope," a tract by J. W. Chadwick, and "How to Die," another American Unitarian Association tract by M. J. Savage; also "Beginnings," by A. W. Gould, Chapter XVIII. "The Power of an Endless Life," sermon by J. W. Chadwick, is a strong word.

LESSON XIV.

THE ENDLESS LIFE.

LESSON TEXT.— "We are the children of God, and, if children, then heirs."— ROM. viii. 16.

What is that goal of human hope,
  That heaven, where every soul is blest?
'Tis light for those who darkly grope;
  To weary ones, 'tis perfect rest.

To young and eager souls, a place
  Where high deeds may be grandly wrought;
To those who mourn some absent face,
  'Tis where the lost ones may be sought.

It is a land where each may find
  That which in vain he sought for here;
Where every element is kind,
  And summer reigns the livelong year.

Is there a country such as this?
  Some glad day thou shalt know, O soul!
Hope whispers of the perfect bliss,
  And points her finger toward the goal.

M. J. Savage.

LESSON TEXT.

I think our lesson text makes a good start for us. We learned something about the endless life in our last lesson. Now, if that is all true, about going on and going on, growing and learning and being more, progress onward and upward forever, then there must be some things for us to remember and some things to do. Because God will not do everything for us. He expects us to climb with our own feet up this mountain of the future. He will give the strength and the opportunity; but we must "work out our own salvation," as the Bible says.

Now the lesson text declares that we are children of God, and, because we are his children, then we are heirs; that is, good children inherit what their fathers may have of property. This may sound strangely. Is it not irreverent to speak of God in this way? No, that is just what the Bible says; and it is right.

Other lessons lead up to this one on the endless life. When we learned about ourselves, we learned also about our sonship to God; and now we see more clearly what that means. We are entitled to certain things which God can give us, and we are in duty bound to do certain things also.

HEIRS.

To help us toward the future we inherit all the good of the past, all the noble examples, all the grand truths, all the virtue and honor.

We are heirs of Christianity, which has been in the world so many centuries. Its Christmas and Easter sing to us. Its hospitals and asylums speak of charity to us.

But beyond all this there belong to us God's own love and care. He is ready to support our efforts for the perfect life.

WORKERS.

This being true, we are not only heirs, but workers. If we have much given to us, then much will be expected from us. There is an old saying to that effect. What kind of work must we do to "inherit eternal life," and go on forever?

1. *Thinking.*—We must use our minds. God gave them to us that we might think out grand thoughts.

2. *Feeling.*— In our hearts let us put affectionate feelings and a loving disposition.

3. *Conscience.*— Like a needle to the pole must our sense of right and wrong ever be.

4. *Doing.*— All the while we will do the best we can, building character.

To-day.

This is the secret of the endless life: to think and feel and do the best we know to-day. "Now is the accepted time."

I have said all this because some may tell you that we ought to think about the future a great deal, and neglect the present. Some will say that the immortal life begins after death. No, it begins now. This day and this lesson are a part of the endless life. Some tell us that we sow seeds of good or ill all our life, and reap the harvest after death. That is not the whole truth. We are sowing and reaping every day in the endless life. We do not know when the whole, full harvest will be.

Good Cheer.

Young people should feel full of hope, and strive for the best when they think of God's gifts to His children. He gives the endless life, long enough to carry out the grandest plan possible. And we ought to be patient and willing to wait, if this is so. God will continue to give more truth and more power and more blessing as we go forward from one world to another.

Life seems very long to a child; every day is a year. But boys and girls begin to see that time is short; and afterward they will be thankful to believe that there are to be "more chances," and that "there is no death."

Jesus and the Endless Life.

We can always get the right word from Jesus about the future. Sometimes we do not understand at first; but, after a little thinking, it grows plain. He says, Any one who tries to find his life will lose it; but he who loseth his life for my sake shall find it, and keep it, and grow upward with it. How is that? Lose your life, and find it! Yes: because Jesus considered selfishness the worst sin. Selfishness cramps and chills and kills the soul. But generosity, sacrifice, love, make the soul grow; and that is the endless life.

To Teachers.

Of course, children are not so much concerned about future as present life. But they are easily given wrong impressions of fear and error as to the future, and about death. This lesson is aimed to strike the key-note of reason and courage in youth. We cannot begin too early to plant correct views as to heaven, death, retribution, and immortality.

Gem Thoughts.

A world of thought and order demands a rational interpretation into terms of life, and not of death.—*C. F. Dole.*

Who can doubt that the process of redemption, even of the stubborn, will be wonderfully hastened in the next life, and that the future state itself may be one of the sublimest of God's agencies for the conversion of men.—*J. Coleman Adams.*

The prophecy of a future existence takes deepest root and is most discoverable in the greatest geniuses and most exalted souls.—*Cicero.*

To look upon the soul as going on from strength to strength, to see His creation forever beautifying in His eyes, and drawing nearer to Him by greater degrees of resemblance, must be a prospect pleasing to God Himself.—*Addison.*

LESSON XV.

THE THINKING CHRISTIAN.

LESSON TEXT.—"Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"—LUKE xii. 57.

QUESTIONS.

1. To what does the lesson text refer?
2. Can you name the two gateways of religion?
3. Why do we demand freedom in religion?
4. What do we mean by "creed-bound"?
5. How do we find the true way?
6. Is there progress in religion?
7. Is all truth sacred?

ANSWERS.

1. At one time, when Jesus was preaching to the people in Judea, he rebuked them because they did not think. Of course, they supposed they were thinking; but Jesus knew that they were only imitating and copying what others said.

He upbraided them: You pretend to know about the weather, and you fancy you can tell what the next day will be; but you do not read the signs of the times, and cannot tell what is to happen. Why do you not judge for yourselves, and think, and so find out what is right?

Now Jesus is always asking every one to think. He said once, "Consider the lilies"; that is, think about them and reason. He asks us to think about his teachings.

2. There are two great doors, or gateways, through which we become religious. These are Reason and Reverence. Some people use only one,—Reason,—and they grow to be very critical and doubting. They are fond of arguing and disputing over little things. Sometimes they become cold and selfish. There are others who use only Reverence. They are in danger of being blind and superstitious. Their error is in bowing down and calling that truth which is only some old habit, some accepted mistake. Reverence alone chokes up the stream of thinking.

But, when you keep open the two gates, and use both, then you are sure to become a thinking Christian. We ought to use our reason, and we ought also to have the spirit of reverence and worship.

3. When Jesus asked the question, "Why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" he the same as said: Why are ye not free? Why are ye so enslaved as to act like beings without minds of your own?

So we believe in Freedom in religion. You must listen to your own conscience, and obey it. You must think for yourself, or else your thought will be very poor.

We believe this, because no one's mind can grow unless it is used. There are gymnastics for the thinking power. Then we also give the right to others to think in freedom. If you make other people believe as you do by fear or by any other method than reason, you are doing them injury. Better they should differ, and do it honestly and

thoughtfully, than to agree with you as a "make-believe." No one can be religious without sincerity.

4. One of the troubles in all the past has been the "creed-bound" Christians. These were men and women who thought that Jesus came to teach theology. So they accepted some great man's statements about the teachings of Jesus, and agreed to believe it all their life. This was called a creed. It was signed and professed, and any one who dared to doubt any part of it was looked upon as a bad person.

So there was to be no thinking, no change, no new truth. A creed can become a tyrant: it can stop all progress, and destroy the real Christ-spirit in him who is bound by it.

A statement of faith may be a help. We ought to believe something, and tell others what it is. But such a creed as that is something that grows and helps, and is open to new truth: that is "creed-helped," the other way is "creed-bound."

5. The true way is to see that some people know something, that there have been revelations in the past, that others have laid foundations. Then we must add to all this our own convictions. No one person can be a judge for all. You and I must learn from others, to begin with. It is so in science, we follow certain leaders. In religion the young mind must be free, but it must also be wise enough to be a disciple. We must ask the question, "What does the grand old past teach?" Then face the present and the future to learn their lessons.

6. You may be told there is no progress in religion, that Jesus Christ revealed religious truth once and for all time. It never changes: it was intended to be the same forever. Do not believe it. There is a great mistake here. What Jesus taught and illustrated, in substance, will always remain the same. I mean what he taught about love, hope, justice, brotherhood, and immortality. That gospel never changes: it will be true in all ages. But what men have said Jesus said is quite another thing. That is theology, or somebody's thinking about the thoughts of Jesus. Theology is always changing, and it is growing better every year. There is progress in religion because the world is growing wiser and better.

7. We learn that all truth is sacred. The thinking Christian is not afraid of any new truth. He knows that, as God is one, so Truth is one. Religion must be full of truth, or it cannot live. It must welcome all truth, or it will suffer. So the truth-seeker, as one has said, is the God-seeker. All truth is not religious; but all truth comes from God, and is friendly to religion.

To Teachers.

Just where the emphasis should be placed in teaching this lesson must be decided greatly by the special class. With some scholars there will be need of impressing the need of reverence for authoritative thinkers, in other cases, the urging should be toward individual reasoning and independence. The latter is perhaps more needed.

References.

Hedge, "Reason in Religion," Channing, "Christianity a Rational Religion," A. U. A. Tracts, Kimball, "Christ and the Creeds," Cressey, "Rational Spirituality," Channing, "Remarks on Creeds," etc.

LESSON XVI.

THE THINKING CHRISTIAN.

LESSON TEXT.—"The truth shall make you free."—JOHN viii. 32

O true one, give me truth,
And let it quench in me
The thirst of this long-craving heart,
And set my spirit free.

H. Bonar.

OUR MOTTO.

What a noble text heads this lesson! It is a good motto for young people to follow through life. Let us see what it means.

An ignorant person is not free. Often he thinks he is; but, really, he obeys passion and error. Sometimes those who are the greatest slaves to ignorance think themselves most free. What is freedom?

FREEDOM.

It is liberty to do what is best and right. That may not seem to be freedom. No, not the kind many people want and try to get. They seek the freedom "to do as I please." But there are different "I's." Which "I" is to be pleased,—the selfish, ignorant one or the noble, educated one?

The man of true freedom is always known by three things: 1. He demands truth first and always. 2. He respects the rights of others. 3. He requires others to respect his rights.

HOW TRUTH MAKES FREE.

There are three kinds of bondage from which we ought to pray to be delivered. You can begin very early to suffer from them. Watch at once, and escape.

Sameness. I mention first the habit of falling into doing and believing just the same thing. Preachers call it "formalism," "lip-service," "Sunday-goodness." When our religion becomes a mere habit of words and lifeless habits, then we are not free. We cannot grow. The life of the soul is chilled. It is winter. The truth comes in to quicken and stir our minds. We think, and then we are saved. It is a deadening effect sameness has, and we must beware.

Selfishness. The second evil is the hard, mean feeling that shuts out love of others who do not believe with us. A sectarian is one who imprisons himself in his little church, and thinks he is safe. He is a slave to bigotry and hardness of heart. He sees no good in the people of other denominations: they are lost. That I call the worst kind of selfishness. The truth comes and rescues that man, and makes him free to look around and over divisions, so that he becomes broad, kind, Christ-like. He is a larger man, and grows up in the liberty wherewith Christ makes free.

Superstition. The third bondage from which we want all delivered is superstition, and the truth can do it. Nothing else can, though truth needs help from love and justice. Yes, because we may have the truth, and throw away superstition; but the perfect freedom comes when we judge lovingly, and put ourselves charitably in the places of those who are not free. Some are educated into superstition, some are afraid and dare not think for themselves, some are born

heedless and without much thinking power. So we must be careful in our judgment. But let us examine ourselves closely, and see if we are truly free. When we look back over the past, what a dark cloud of superstition seems to hang there! It is rolling away. Let us help on the better time of knowledge and truth by banishing foolish habits and talk. Many young people believe in whims and odd notions. They talk seriously about "signs" and omens and strange accidents. It is dangerous, because it prevents us from being free.

REASON AND FAITH.

Some one may tell you that we must believe by faith, that we cannot reason and must not. Do not listen to such talk. It is unchristian. God has given us the great faculty above all other beings known on earth, that makes us most like Him,— the reason, the thinking brain. He asks us to use it. When we use this power properly, our heavenly Father is honored. A faith that is without reasons will never stand: it is too weak for use. There are many things we cannot understand; but we have faith in what we do not know, because we have reason to have faith in what we do know.

BUT MORE.

If any one tells you not to reason about religious matters, ask him what he has done in coming to such a decision. Has he not used reason? It is the only faculty he has for thinking at all. Now, if he reasons a little and poorly, you simply proceed to reason more and better. Both use reason, the one feebly and timidly, the other strongly and courageously.

CHRISTIANITY FULL OF TRUTH.

Christianity is a gospel of truth: it brings freedom. Now we can receive truth only so far as we stand ready to receive it, or as we go out and search for it. Jesus said this over and over. "Knock, and it shall be opened unto you"; "The seed that falls into good soil shall spring up a hundred-fold"; "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

The truth in Christianity waits for the thinker to come and take it, and use it in the world, and make it common property. Here are some practical points:—

a. Study the Bible yourself. Find out just what it means, and do not rest too much on the words of others.

b. Never give too much weight to one text or one part of the Bible. Look over the whole field. Put one saying with another.

c. Assume that there were good reasons for old beliefs, now outgrown, and try to get at the causes.

d. Always remember that the spirit is greater than the letter. Rise from little views to large principles.

e. Be ready to let in light from every source.

GEM THOUGHTS.

If a man abstain from falsehood, it shall be well with him. Truth will lead to every virtue.— *Hindu.*

Christianity is professedly a revelation of reason. . . . The cause of reason is the cause of faith.— *Hedge.*

God cannot be exhausted. He has ever new things for new spirits, who become the most religious when they submit to the onward tendency, and break away in pursuit of the infinite mystery.— *Weiss.*

And what is reason? Be she thus defined: Reason is upright stature in the soul.— *Young.*

LESSON XVII.

ONE FLOCK.

Lesson Text.—"They shall become one flock."—John x. 16.

Questions.

1. What is a church?
2. Why are Christians so divided?
3. What does the lesson text imply?
4. How can unity be brought about?
5. How far are we on the way?

Answers.

1. The word "church" is used in various senses. Sometimes we mean a building where religious worship is observed. Again it stands for a religious membership of those who have "joined the church." Or it is used when any one speaks of some society, with its pastor and people.

In this lesson we are to talk about the Universal Church, which is a simple, plain subject, and ought to interest us all. We mean by that term a coming together in the future of all Christians, not into one church, just the same in belief and forms, but a universal company, or general society, united in love and good works. So we use the word "church" as meaning the people. Our lesson text says "one flock."

2. But let us look around on the actual facts. There is no Universal Church now, is there,—no "one flock"? Some sects claim to be the one great Church, but no body but themselves allows it to be true. On Sunday the people go to many different churches, and hard feelings exist between them and hard words are uttered. Some ministers of some churches declare the ministers and congregations of other churches to be lost. Why are Christians so bitterly divided?

Because they do not read the Bible alike, because they are not educated in the right way, because we are not yet perfect Christians. There are good people in all churches; but good people do not always agree, and in religion they are very strong one way or the other.

3. Let us turn to the lesson text for a moment. Jesus was preaching a sermon on the Largeness of Religion, and he took as one illustration the shepherds and their flocks. He told the narrow Jews who listened, and did not like to hear, that others could have the gospel, that there were sheep coming from many directions, but they would be one flock at last,—many folds, but one flock. A fold was the division for a portion of the flock, and in these different folds the sheep were distributed at night. Yet they had one shepherd, and were united as a flock.

Jesus drew this picture, and it will never fade. He meant that some time the various sects would be gathered into one great body; and, while having their different churches, or folds, they would be one in their aims and spirit. Jesus, the good Shepherd, will lead the great flock; and they shall all know his voice, even from the least unto the greatest.

4. But you may wonder how this can be brought about. Here

is something you can do to help on the better days. Follow these rules. *a.* Never think or say that, because some one honestly goes to another church than yours, he is bad or must be lost. *b.* Never suppose that the church you and your parents attend has all the truth and all the goodness. *c.* Never speak slightingly of any one who is seriously religious, be he of your own church, or of some other faith different from yours. *d.* Never allow any one to speak slightingly of your own form of religion, but stand for it by speech and deed in a dignified, loyal way. *e.* In studying the history of Christianity, always look below the surface, and see how the truths that might have united all were lost in quarrellings and hatreds. *f.* Have this for a test of who is a Christian: Which way does he face, and how is his heart? *g.* Agree to disagree on many things, but build a union of agreement on good works and character.

If boys and girls will begin with these rules, and adhere to them in all the years, then there is hope of the Universal Church.

5. Take courage, young people; for we are on the way to our goal. If you will look back in your history books, it will be plain to you that we who live in this day are more charitable and brotherly in religion than the people of old. They killed enemies by the thousands in church quarrels. There were "religious" wars that blasted whole countries. Noble men, and brave, were burned at the stake for honestly speaking out. Persecutions were common everywhere in Christendom.

Most of this has gone by, never, we trust, to be revived. In countries where the strongest intolerance reigned, there is a great change for the better. And in our own United States there is less bigotry and narrowness. But much more liberality must be shown before we can be satisfied.

Some of the hopeful signs of the times are these: the doing away with long, cruel creeds, and putting in their places simple, loving statements of belief; the joining of different churches and ministers in work together; the throwing away of bitter words and harsh talk from the pulpit; the setting up of Jesus as the leader, and less demand for creed slavery.

There must always allowance be made for different choices in forms of worship, different views on many points, different ideas as to the future life; but all churches can be one in making the world better and in spreading real Christianity.

Dear Master, while we hear thy voice
That says, "The truth shall make you free,"
Thy servants still by loving choice,
Oh, keep us faithful unto thee.

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

TO TEACHERS.

It has been intimated that scholars of the Intermediate grade cannot be interested in this subject. I venture a different opinion. It is essential that children learn early the course they ought to pursue in forming and holding a religious faith. The picture of the Oriental shepherd and his flock serves well to start the more serious part of the lesson.

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LESSON XVIII.

ONE FLOCK.

LESSON TEXT.—"Church of the living God."—1 TIMOTHY iii. 15.

O God, by whom all change is wrought,
By whom new things to light are brought,
In whom no change is known!
Whate'er Thou dost, whate'er Thou art,
Thy children still in Thee have part;
Still, still, Thou art our own.

TEXT AND POEM.

Taken together, the lesson text and the poetry tell us how the Universal Church must be and will be made. The true church is one which believes in a "living God," and has part in working with Him. That is all, and that is everything. What do we mean by believing in a "living God," and by working with Him?

If you are invited to see something done, to witness an exhibition, you are simply a spectator. What you behold may be beautiful or strange, and you may admire or wonder. But you have no part: it is not your own. On the other hand, if you assist in some work and help, you are no longer a spectator: you become a part of the affair, and it is yours.

A TRUE CHURCH.

A true church does not make people spectators: it ought to put them to work. The wrong church leads people to think that they are very good, and nothing needs to be done on their part. They consider heaven a place, far off, to which they will go. The true church describes heaven as a condition here and hereafter, which we make. The true church does not worship a God far off, in space or time, but One who is near, and ever loving and living.

THE REASONS.

Now every one ought to belong to a church, the best church he can find. There are many reasons. Let us mention a few. *a.* If we want to reform the world, we must do it together. Much more can be done when a number of people pull together than when each pulls alone. *b.* If we want to help ourselves, we must do it with others. We cannot become our best alone. *c.* If we want to spread the gospel of Jesus, and make his teachings known over the world, we must work for that object in the church. In that way we find larger opportunities and exert more power.

THE SIGNS.

Even a single church can show what the Universal Church may be, just as one fine orchard, with rich fruit, is a specimen of what all orchards ought to be. There are certain signs by which you can tell a true church.

It will not talk about its creed or its liturgy as much as it will about its plans and deeds. It will not boast of size and crowds, but will try to be faithful to its duties.

A church of the living God does not depend on fine music or sensational sermons or attacks on other churches. But always does it feed the congregation with truth, and keeps itself free from petty quarrels.

THREE MEN.

I want you to remember three names, and, as you grow older, read the lives of these men who tried to make one flock out of all the Christian folds. They are Channing, Ballou, Parker. Others there are who in this country believed in the Universal Church; but, if you study the biographies of these, you will understand all the others.

One of our own preachers has said, "That Church is the best which finds and practises the most truth."

Another asks the question, "Whom should the Church include?" and answers, "It ought to include all those whose lives run on the lines of good will."

But the Church we are thinking about will include truth-seekers and doubters, those who are on the line of good will and those who are off, those who are strong and those who are weak. The flock will contain all who — some much, some a little — are trying for the better life.

TWO THINGS.

As we look back, we find that all churches in all times have had two observances. They were not always understood in the same way, did not always mean the same thing to different churches. But they are as much alive now as hundreds of years ago. One is called the "Lord's Supper," the other is Baptism. Just before Jesus died, he sat down with his disciples in a small room, and shared a meal with them. It was at night, and proved to be the last time he ate and drank with his followers. Therefore, it has been called the Last Supper. Other names are The Communion Service, The Table of Remembrance.

We think of it as a memorial service, recalling Jesus and all those who have suffered for truth and God.

Baptism you have often seen in church, when the minister puts water on the forehead of the little child, and offers prayer. This means to us that we believe God loves children, and we hope this one will grow up to be a true child of God. And the words of Jesus are read: "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

No matter how much abused these beautiful forms have been (and your teacher will tell you, if necessary), still they can be made parts of the Universal Church.

TO TEACHERS.

Impress the value of church-going and parish loyalty on high grounds. Such instruction is needed to-day. Show how fidelity to one's church does not mean narrowness. Explain that Jesus did not make his chief teaching turn on personal religion, though that came first: he aimed at combinations of persons, in order to realize the most good. If all the churches would unite in a common cause, what a power they might be!

GEM THOUGHTS.

The Church of Christ is essentially and necessarily a broad church. Broad? That is a poor word. It is wide-reaching as the Infinite. It is a unity, for all its members are bound together by their common love of righteousness. But it admits of infinite diversity.— *Professor Momerie.*

Such is Christian faith, everywhere one and the same thing, colored on the outside by doctrine, but not changed in its inner essence. It is that which all good men hold in common.— *Rev. George Putnam.*

No sect can command the whole chromatic gamut which the gospel sweeps. It needs the full choir of churches for its expression. *Starr King.*

LESSON XIX.

RELIGION AND RELIGIONS.

LESSON TEXT.—"The same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever."—HEBREWS xiii. 8.

QUESTIONS.

1. How do you explain the title of this lesson?
2. What is the meaning of the lesson text?
3. Can you tell what "evolution" means?
4. Will you mention some of the abiding parts of religion?
5. What ought we to do?

ANSWERS.

1. This is a strange title, is it not?—Religion and Religions! But that does not sound sensible. Is there one religion? and are there others coming and going, while the one remains just the same?

No, hardly that, though we may put it something so.

Let us lay this foundation truth: through all the changes in religion and inside all the differences among men and countries there is one general spirit, or soul of things. This gives us great hope. We are no more frightened when some people tell us we are wrong in believing a particular thing. We can give up the thing without losing religion.

You have been sailing. The wind changed. You kept on sailing, though. When steamers were invented, they did not do away with the compass and the rudder. No, navigation goes on, whether with a ship such as Columbus used or in a Cunarder.

Some people think their religion depends on the small things they do or believe. If they were to lose faith in their Prayer-book or in their creed, they would lose faith in God and in Jesus. This is being a slave to clothes, or to appearances. The true Christian is not bound to any such small thing.

Then, if we look up over the whole world, we find various religions, in Japan, India, Turkey, and other countries. But, if we are wise, we see that at heart there is only one religion.

2. All this is true of the lesson text. The writer of Hebrews was speaking of Jesus; and he said, He is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and forever. There have been many changes in churches, many views put forth, much progress in Christianity; but the Founder of Christianity remains the same. Truth is always the same, but we do not always look at truth the same way. We know more about the sun than did those who lived long ago, before science sprang up; but science has not changed the sun: our thoughts have changed. There is a Christianity that never changes. Like a sun of wonderful beauty and power, it shines on: our understanding of it changes. We know more, and others after us will know still more.

3. I have not used the word "evolution" in all these lessons; and yet you ought to know the word, and understand what it means, because you will be constantly coming upon it, and, unless you have this knowledge, it will be a blank, and all it refers to will be dark.

Evolution means an unrolling or an unwinding. It also means a growth. If we say the rose-bush was evolved from the rose-seed, we

mean it grew. We say of a plan for a building: The architect evolved it in his mind; that is, it grew in the man's thought.

Now there was a time when nearly all believed that God created the earth and the stars at one stroke of power. It was believed that everything, animals, trees, man, were made, manufactured, at once. Now we are told by science that everything has grown,—very slowly, but steadily grown on and up from a few to many, from simplicity to variety. That is evolution,—one steady, ceaseless unrolling of nature, up, up, and out into this wonderful world we see. All this was stated in our first lesson, but somewhat differently.

Now the same thing has happened in religion. The religious nature in man has unrolled and grown, and spread out into the wonderful results we see. Religion can never pass away. It is eternal. It will go through many changes, but it will continue to grow. As you become older, you will read more about evolution; and you will remember this one truth, I hope: what was in at the beginning had to come out, and nothing has come out but what was at the start.

4. This needs a little explanation. If there was nothing in the rose-seed, nothing would come up. Or, if the seeds of any kind were not always the same, we could not count on any particular crops. But each seed "evolves" into its kind of body. Now there would be no religion if we did not have religious natures. The first men on the earth had some religious possibilities: they grew, and for centuries these possibilities have been evolving.

Man has love of truth, reverence, worship, hope of immortality. He prays, repents, believes in gods or God, fears or loves, has a conscience as to right and wrong.

These religious instincts were the same yesterday, and are to-day the same, and will be to-morrow. All people who have lived have wondered about this world, and tried to make peace with God. This is what I mean by the religion that always lives and is the same.

5. Does it make no difference, then, what we think or feel? Indeed, it is of great importance. The idea of evolution does not release us from duty. The rose-seed reaches up to the air and light. So we must make effort to grow up into character. God gives us a religious nature. We must cultivate a religious character. This is something into which our own thought and will enter. Let us not fasten our faith to any small passing thing, but grow ever nobler and larger with the unfolding truth, love, and justice that are in the one eternal Christianity.

To Teachers.

I consider this subject difficult for this grade: it is remote. But it is essential, and the skill of the teacher must be brought to bear on the abstract topic. Draw illustrations from nature and from history. We must prepare children early to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials, if we would ground them in a reliable faith. A wise, loyal spirit toward the "substance of things hoped for" will save them in all experiences.

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LESSON XX.

REVIEW.

I. Light of the World.

This is one of the names we give to Jesus, the Christ.

Jesus is a light because he declares the love of an infinite Being whose providence rules the universe. This eternal love was from the beginning. When we see this, then the darkness of evil, sorrow, and chance, becomes interpreted to our good.

We believe that, when the spirit of Jesus is more widely spread through the world, the true brotherhood of man will exist and the angel's song of peace and good will be heard.

We learn from his example how to gain honor and dignity for our common human nature. Jesus is our leader to the goal of perfection.

Mankind is in darkness without leadership. There have been many leaders of men, but we believe that Jesus of Nazareth has shown the way of life beyond all other leaders. He saw as no one had seen before that God is a Father and that men are brothers; and he so lived these thoughts that he has become the Light of the World.

He is the Way, because his leadership brings men to God. He is the Truth, because he taught and *lived* the truth. He is the Life, because his spirit touching our hearts gives life, and gives it more and more abundantly.

We believe we ought to follow him by doing as he would have us do. In this way he becomes the Way, the Truth, and the Life unto salvation by character.

II. The Endless Life.

We are beginning in this world a long existence. God has made us immortal beings. What we call death is "transition,"—a change, a going forward into some other place.

Every human being is a child of God, and partakes of the divine nature. God is a spirit. He is life, not death. And man is also spirit, and his spirit cannot die. The body is the home of the spirit here on earth, and as such is sacred. In the course of years the body dies. The spirit is freed from the body, and mounts to higher and higher forms. In this great faith Jesus is our leader.

Jesus said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." We have not seen the future home, but we believe it is real.

Scripture tells us we are "children, or sons of God." This truth convinces us that we must be heirs of God's love and care. We must therefore be careful to be worthy of such a great privilege.

We are heirs of the past wisdom and glory which this world offers. We are also in possession of its struggles, evils, and woes. We must be vigilant to do our duty, and leave the world better than we found it.

We possess a boundless hope, which enables us to be brave when our friends leave us, confident that God cares for them, and that we shall see them again.

III. The Thinking Christian.

We believe that Jesus wished all who loved him, and who followed his teachings, to be thoughtful and courageous. To this end came he into the world, that the truth might be seen and known and declared. No one can be free in his soul, who has not this spirit: "The truth shall make you free."

If we would have a firm faith, we must be able to give reasons for it. Not all faith can be reasoned out, but superstition makes a slave of him who does not think.

Reason and Reverence are the two windows through which the light of revelation enters.

We believe that truth is one, as light is one. From the sun proceeds the various lights that illuminate the world. There is one source. So God is the source of all truth.

A thinking Christian is one who is able and glad to see good in other sects, ready to obey new truth, and anxious to learn the doctrine by doing.

IV. One Flock.

Jesus spoke of "one flock," and taught that in time there would be a coming together of all good people, who might not believe exactly alike. We believe in the Church Universal. We mean by that a brotherhood of those who are willing to work for the kingdom of love and righteousness.

Churches are divided now over forms and doctrines. They will come together on life and character. We must do our part toward bringing in the better time.

Let us be thankful for the great improvement in the world during the past few centuries. In our own land of freedom there cannot be any persecutions for opinion's sake in religion. More and more the spirit of true Christianity is spreading. "Out of the heart are the issues of life"; and we must call him a Christian who has in his heart the love of humanity, and in his character the law of righteousness.

Let us be loyal to our own faith in a broad spirit; and then we shall be helping on the Universal Church, the one flock, of all true believers.

V. Religion and Religions.

We see through the long past some religious elements that never change. They are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. As mankind grows wiser, and moves more into the light, some old beliefs are no longer of value. But, in losing these, we are not throwing away religion. It can never pass away. Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord abideth forever. By His word is meant, not texts and particular thoughts, but the inner truth or soul of things.

Theology is not religion: it is what men think about God, Man, Duty, and Destiny. As the ages roll by, man's thought grows larger and nobler. Some people fear to change anything in religion. They lack faith. Religion must have liberty to grow.

Jesus taught the religion that will always live. We need not be afraid to see forms change.

Gem Thoughts.

We must keep our teaching of religion large and vital, to think of it always, not as putting facts into a box, but as putting truth into a nature.— *Phillips Brooks.*

The thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns. *Tennyson.*

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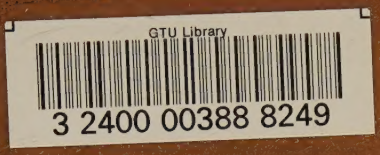

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